CHAPTER IV

River and Harbor

Q: You moved from there to Seattle. What was your first job in Seattle? How did you get there? Did you take your family there? Let's discuss that.

A: Yes, I drove out by car in September. I took a leave and went up to see my parents in Vermont, bought a new car, and then started driving west with my wife and my two children. It was a delightful experience. We spent a little time in Yellowstone, and then went on to Seattle, where I'd never been before. We lived at Fort Lawton, initially. It was a military post, and they had quarters that they gave us until I could find a place in Seattle. I was a captain; in fact I'd been made a captain since the day I reported to the WPA, August 1, 1935, which was when the new law went into effect that made me a captain because I'd had more than ten years' service. In Seattle there were two Assistant District Engineers. One had the Administrative side and I had the good fortune to be the one that had Operations, or the outside job. It was fascinating. I had a fairly free play from the Great Divide in Montana to the Pacific; in other words, Western Montana and Idaho, most of the State of Washington except the lower Columbia River, and Alaska. We had a lot of work going on, and because of my background in the East, the civilian administrator of the WPA for the State of Washington, a chap named Nicholson, asked for me to head up a number of projects there. I had a considerable number of Engineer projects on the rivers of the Northwest; in fact, we had projects on about every river in the State of Washington. This was particularly true over on the Olympic Peninsula, where we had a lot of Indians on relief status, so we had WPA projects improving the banks of the rivers and making a lot of other improvements. It was simple but interesting as we enjoyed a lot of travel, a lot of outdoor work with good hunting and fishing mixed in. So we had four of the happiest years of our life in the Northwest.

The District Engineer at first was Colonel Herbert J. Wild. Colonel Wild retired while I was there (retirement age was 64 then), so you can see he was fairly well advanced in years. He was a graduate of the Pennsylvania Military College, a very nice person but a gruff old fellow. He'd buffalo you if you let him do it, but if you stood up to him he treated you

pretty fine, and I enjoyed a very nice relationship with him.

Our Division Engineer in Portland was Colonel John C. H. Lee. He arrived in early 1937. The former Division Engineer of the Northern Pacific Division had been Colonel Robins, who became the Chief of Engineers in Washington later. Lee was a man of splendid character. He bothered a lot of people because he seemed rather stiff-necked and rigid in his approach, but he was a very high-minded gentleman, and I learned a lot from him. I had great respect for him. He was more rigid than I was in some ways and I observed that and its impact on some people, both above and below him, which helped me, although I didn't emulate him in that regard . . . or tried not to, anyhow. Lee was a man who definitely saw the war coming. He was from the class of 1909 at West Point and maintained a close liaison with the G-3 of the 9th Corps Area at the Presidio of San Francisco, who was then Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Ridgway, later Chief of Staff and another man who became a longtime friend of mine.

In those early days, particularly 1939, we saw the war coming very definitely and we started taking extra long looks at Alaska, which included plans for shipping prefabricated barracks for cantonments both on Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. Ridgway and Lee both saw it coming, but they had to convince their superiors too as to what should be done in Alaska. So over and above our normal river and harbor work, I began to get enmeshed in what amounted to some of the early war planning for Alaska, which to me was fascinating. At that time I still had what was called Mud Mountain Dam as one of my projects, and we were starting the early work on what later became the Hungry Horse Dam over in Montana in the Glacier National Park.

Harry Kelly was the editor of the Kalispell Monitor. He was a leading businessman and one of the great promoters of the Hungry Horse Dam and anything else that would develop Western Montana. We had some work at Kalispell, on the Bitterroot River, and on the Clarks Fork at a number of dam sites where dams have since been built.

Q: I want to relate to you a sequence of events. I'll mention some names, and I've got the feeling that you had a great deal to do in insuring that work in the Clarks Fork Basin got the congressional approval that was needed. I have a letter written to the Congressman Thorkelson.

A: Yes, House of Representatives. He was from Butte, Montana.

Q: And then Congressman White, Committee on Irrigation and Restoration, wrote a letter to John H. Wourns, in Wallace, Idaho, and he thanked him for a speech that apparently Mr. Wourns had sent him, and Congressman White had it inserted in the Congressional Record on February 1st as his own, and he thanked Wourns. I had the impression from reading through your files that Mr. Wourns didn't write that speech, but that perhaps Captain Trudeau had written it?

A: Yes I did. We had to find a way to get some of those things done. The relationship between Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana and President Roosevelt was such that anything Wheeler wanted was blocked for the Northwest, and it wasn't until he had repaired his relationship with Roosevelt that we were able to move beyond some of the elementary stages of surveys and engineering on the Hungry Horse. It's now a great dam.

Q: Now, let's look through this scrapbook and perhaps bring some incidents to mind. I think you mentioned Guy Atkinson, who had something to do with the Mud Mountain Dam, which has a rather unusual name.

A: Yes, he was the prime contractor for the Mud Mountain Dam, which was a structure upon the White River near Enumclaw, Washington, about 50 miles from Seattle. There is a little story connected with this that I think is interesting because of military implications. This dam was peculiar in that it had vertical walls almost 400 feet high and it was difficult to build a dam at the site because the rock walls only went up for 200 feet and the top 200 feet were glacial till. This, because of stress and strain, makes it very difficult to lock in or anchor a rigid dam such as a concrete dam. So we decided that we'd build a rolled earth-filled dam; as it finally came out, it was modified into a rock-filled dam. But I think the most interesting story from the military standpoint has to do with the naming of the dam. Obviously, Mud Mountain Dam is not something that assures you a feeling of safety, and it used to bother us that people down below on the river didn't feel too comfortable about a 400-foot Mud Mountain Dam above them.

I started looking for the name of someone to name this dam for, and in doing so I came across the name (by going to a Professor of History at the University of Washington) of the man who had most to do with the development of Washington into a territory. He later became its first governor, and his name was Isaac Ingalls Stevens. Having found that out, I went into his history to quite an extent, and then after convincing our own people in the Engineers that we should give it a better name (because this required Congressional approval), we got Senator Schwellenbach to do whatever was necessary to put in a bill to name it after the first governor of the territory, Isaac Ingalls Stevens Dam. The war came along, however, and it never passed Congress. What makes it still interesting is this, really two points: first the history of the man, and second the way I had occasion to tell his story.

In the early 1850s there was a terrific contest between the North and the South as to who would build a railway to the Pacific and open up the country. You remember the trek to the West through the center of the country and the California gold rush in 1849. Well, we knew a lot about northern routes, of course, because of Lewis and Clark's exploration in 1807. We knew something about southern routes to the West, although that had only been taken over, as you remember, a few years before from the Mexicans. When President Pierce came into power in 1853, he decided to send an expedition to the Pacific to see what routes should be developed. Captain Isaac Ingalls Stevens of the Corps of Engineers was selected to head up this job. Stevens went to St. Louis to organize his supplies and then moved north to St. Paul.

On the 20th of May 1853, he moved west with about 200 Indian scouts, soldiers, and surveyors, and he reached Olympia, Washington -- 2,000 miles to the west -- on Christmas Eve of 1853, having surveyed in a very general way the Dakotas, Montana, Idaho, and Washington, and having marked out to a very large degree what became the routes of all three of our major transcontinental railroads: the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific, the Chicago-Minneapolis and St. Paul. He was then appointed the first governor of Washington Territory.

Back in Washington, D. C., however, the southern interests said, "We must get these routes to run through the South, we've got the better climate, and

they can't get through the North, anyway. Jefferson Davis was the Secretary of War, so he picked out another Army officer named George D. McClellan, of later Civil War fame, to prove a northern route to the Pacific was not feasible. McClellan took the portage across Nicaragua, which was the quickest way to the Pacific in those days, then took a sailing vessel to Seattle, and arrived in the Puget Sound area. He faced the Cascades Mountains and made two or three passes to get through the Cascade Range and satisfied himself that no railroad could ever be built through the Cascades. He went back to Washington and so reported to Secretary Davis. On the other hand, Stevens came back in 1854 and reported that they could, and he had the topographic data. In other words -- to finish this part of the story -- Stevens won and thereby was developed a lifelong enmity between Stevens and George B. McClellan.

All right, now what about these fellows, both graduates of West Point, both serving under Robert E. Lee in the Mexican War in 1846. They knew each other and had a pleasant relationship at that time. As a Governor of Washington Territory, Stevens went back to Congress annually as its delegate. When the Civil War broke out, he volunteered for active duty and became a colonel. McClellan was then a brigadier or major general and still hated his guts because Stevens had outpointed him by showing that the railroad could be built through the North. McClellan was not a Southerner, but he'd been serving a Southerner and his findings had been proved wrong. Out of spite, McClellan gave Stevens a couple of dirty jobs, one of which was to take over a regiment of New York Zouaves that had rioted around Baltimore. Stevens got them back in shape, and then he got his star. He eventually was killed about a year or so later at the Battle of Chantilly while leading his troops in a charge.

I said there was a second reason why I found this story of interest. I was the chairman of our annual West Point dinner in Seattle in 1939. We alternated those dinners . . . one year at Fort Lewis and the next year in Seattle, as there were quite a number of officers in Seattle on duty. The 1939 dinner was scheduled for Seattle. I had asked the G-3 of the 3d Division from Fort Lewis to come up and give the talk, then Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower. He was in quite some demand even in those days; at the last minute he couldn't come. I talked it over with our

committee and since this happened so quickly, they said, "You give the talk," so I picked on this Isaac Ingalls Stevens story. I think I knew it before, but as I reviewed his biography I realized this was telling a very interesting story about a young officer in peace and in war and the political repercussions he faced. It was also very interesting because he was the number-one man in the class of the 1839 at West Point and this was the 100th anniversary year.

A year or so ago, my friend Bob Stevens, former Secretary of War and a man that, I think, along with Ridgway picked me to be G-2 of the Army at the time of the McCarthy hearings, gave a talk at the Carl Mundt Library dedication in South Dakota; in this talk, he identified as his ancestor Isaac Ingalls Stevens. Bob knew that he had the mission to the West, and we have enjoyed reminiscing at length about the interesting matter of his distinguished ancestor.

Q: We've just about wound up your activity with Rivers and Harbors in Seattle, and obviously the cloud of war was starting to form in 1939. You've already indicated that many of you there recognized that something was soon to happen.

A: Yes, we thought we saw it definitely coming. As a matter of fact, it might surprise people to know that as early as 1936, when I was with the WPA in New York, I had a certain offer made to me to help the British get set up to buy munitions from us in the United States. The day war was declared between Germany and Britian, after the advance into Poland, I was in an Engineer yacht pulling into the harbor of Victoria, British Columbia, early on a Sunday morning, when a boat put out to meet us. It was only then that we learned that the war had been declared, at least by Britain, and to us it just became a matter of time when we'd be in it.

I was anxious because as I said I was more inclined toward the combat soldier end of it, the military end of it, than I was the engineering. I'd gone into the Engineers because I thought there were exceptional opportunities there to get a lot of responsibility at an early age -- and this I found was true -- and avoided a lot of repetitive training that seemed unproductive to me. I think I mentioned once before that the Chief of Engineers said that I couldn't go to Leavenworth (our Staff College) until I'd been on River and Harbor work. Now I thought I'd had enough

of it, and I was hoping I'd get ordered to Leavenworth. I was quite happy in that fall of 1939 to find that I would go to Leavenworth in 1940 to take the regular course. With war in sight, things developed rapidly, of course, so the next thing I knew I wasn't going to Leavenworth because there wasn't going to be a regular course at Leavenworth; I was ordered to troops. I was ordered to the 8th Engineers, 1st Cavalry Division.